

# In the News

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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## Message from the Mayor

The District's public education system is broken. Despite spending enormous amounts of money on education, the District's public schools have among the lowest test scores in the nation. This is unacceptable and it cannot continue. We are failing our kids.

On February 17, I sent legislation to the Council that will remove major barriers to reform so that the school system can immediately begin instituting critical education improvements. The Council is scheduled to vote on this legislation on Tuesday, April 20.

To successfully reform our education system, the Superintendent or Chancellor must be empowered with clear direction and cross-agency support. The most effective way to provide this empowerment is to streamline the governance structure. Having our school administrator report directly to the Mayor, combined with the oversight and guidance of the Council, presents our best hope for transforming our troubled public school system.

If the Council approves my education reform bill, the Council and the Mayor will take a more active role to provide a new Superintendent or Chancellor with clear direction and accountability to improve the schools. We can streamline operations to bring about much-needed reforms and we can coordinate services for the schools—services that other human service agencies can provide while making our school buildings safe.

We have a moral obligation to try something different. The status quo is not working. The "stability" issue is a false argument. There has been very little stability under the current structure. We have had lots of turnover of superintendents and senior management. They have all left at this point. The current structure does not provide any measure of stability or confidence.

The time for change is now. The window of opportunity—as we search for new leadership for the school system—has never been greater.

I hope that the Council will adopt my proposal, the Omnibus Board of Education and DC Public School Restructuring Act of 2004. Our children need and deserve a school system that works.



## AGENCY WEBSITES

[Office of Tax and Revenue](#)

[Department of Parks and Recreation](#)

[Department of Employment Services](#)

[Metropolitan Police Department](#)

[Office of Boards and Commissions](#)

[Commission on the Arts and Humanities](#)

# 2004 Cherry Blossom Festival

I'm pleased to report that this year we had yet another successful Cherry Blossom Festival! On March 27, I helped kick off the 2004 Cherry Blossom Festival, which drew thousands of local residents and visitors to our city.

This year marked the 92nd anniversary of the gift of the cherry blossom trees from Japan, and the 150th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Peace and Amity between the US and Japan in 1854—officially beginning formal relations between the two countries.

The Cherry Blossom Festival has been annually celebrated in our city since 1935. This year we opened the festival at the spectacular new Mandarin Oriental hotel at the Southwest waterfront.



The National Cherry Blossom Festival is Washington, DC's signature event. The festival brings nearly 1 million visitors and residents to the Tidal Basin annually. This year, it's helping to bring the total number of visitors to the city to an estimated 19 million.

Each year, the National Cherry Blossom Festival does a fantastic job of putting together the best spring festival in the nation. For two weeks, visitors and residents have the opportunity to participate in a variety of activities celebrating these lovely trees.

The beautiful cherry trees, given to the United States by Tokyo Mayor Yukio Ozaki in 1912, remind us of the importance and the beauty of the friendship shared between our two nations. What started as a simple tree planting ceremony on March 27, 1912, has created an important bond and friendship between the people of the United States and Japan.

## Community Profile

### Robert V. Brannum

Robert V. Brannum is a native Washingtonian and a Ward 5 resident. He is a retired military non-commissioned officer from the United States Air Force Reserves who has received many military honors, including the US Air Force Commendation Medal, the US Army Commendation Medal and the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal. Robert has been an active resident, focusing many of his volunteer efforts around public safety, affordable housing and education.

Robert is the chairman of the Executive Management Committee of the North Capitol Neighborhood Development Corporation, a nonprofit community housing development corporation that provides affordable housing to low-income families, and a member of the Mayor's Citizen Advisory Panel on Public Safety/Justice. Robert has also worked with the DC Emergency Management Agency to inform residents about all aspects of homeland security.

Formerly president of the Bloomingdale Civic Association, Robert currently teaches social studies at Evans Middle School. Robert's great love for the District has led him to instill in his students the importance of serving. "Students need to see the value in service," Robert said. "They need to understand the importance of service."



Robert Brannum

In the late 1990s, the Bloomingdale community was in the midst of a crime wave due to illegal drug use and trafficking. Robert joined with many neighbors to walk the streets of his community in order to take back the streets from the dealers. Today, this historic African American community enjoys a state of revitalization and rejuvenation.

Robert has also volunteered with the American Red Cross and the American Heart Association. He co-directed and coordinated food and clothing distributions at the DC Disaster Relief Center during the DC flood of August 2001, helped coordinate community cleanups, and volunteered at the Pentagon Disaster Relief Center. "Whatever the service need is, if I can be of service in my community, I will be there. I am a fighter for the underdog—for those who can't fight for themselves," Robert said.

Robert is the February 2004 adult winner of the Mayor's Community Service Award, sponsored by Serve DC. If you would like to nominate a youth or adult for the monthly award, visit [www.serve.dc.gov](http://www.serve.dc.gov) for nomination information, or call (202) 727-9461.



LINK TO OTHER  
WEBSITES

[DC Agenda](#)

[Hands on DC](#)

[DC Convention  
and Tourism](#)

[DC Public Library](#)

## Annual DC We Read

On April 7, I joined Richard L. Jackson, interim director of the District of Columbia Public Library, to announce that the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Interpreter of Maladies*, by Jhumpa Lahiri, was chosen as the book for the DC We Read citywide book club, where everyone is encouraged to read the same book at the same time.

*Interpreter of Maladies* is a compilation of short stories about life in India and issues concerning immigration. The library has designated this book as recommended reading for adults during the month of May.

For the third year in a row, the DC Public Library will host DC We Read as a way to stimulate literacy and discussion. The goal of the project is to inspire people of all backgrounds, ages and educational levels across the city to rediscover the joy of reading. To enhance the reading experience, formal book discussions have again been organized. These discussions are scheduled to occur in May at select libraries and Starbucks Coffee Company stores in the city.

Brochures detailing the events for DC We Read will be available in DC Public Libraries, Starbucks Coffee Company stores, participating retail bookstores, and other government agencies across the city beginning Monday, April 12.

The brochures include a discussion guide produced for the project with background information on the author, discussion questions and links to other resources. The program schedule, discussion guide and author information is also available on the Library's website at [www.dclibrary.org](http://www.dclibrary.org).

Literacy is a priority of my administration—among young people and adults. DC We Read is a terrific way to get people engaged in reading and discussing great books. I look forward to reading this year's selection and discussing it with others.

DC We Read 2004 is being sponsored by community partners including *The Washington Post*, Starbucks Coffee Company, Walkers Shortbread and Washington Gas.

## Latino Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Program

Last month, the District announced a new \$425,000 program funded through the Department of Health's Addiction Prevention and Recovery Administration and the Office on Latino Affairs—the "Latino Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Program."

The program is aimed at improving health programs and services for at-risk adults in the Latino community with substance abuse problems.

Through this grant, for the first time, the District government will provide culturally and linguistically appropriate residential treatment services to the Latino population in the heart of its community. The funds will go toward the development, facilitation and improvement of health programs, projects and services, aimed at diminishing the negative effects of substance abuse in our city's Hispanic community.

The grant aims to improve health opportunities for Latino residents of the District in three priority areas:

- Substance abuse prevention/education for seniors
- Fetal alcoholism syndrome prevention
- Inpatient treatment for adult Latinos

This grant will help three local community-based organizations provide necessary and important health services to Latino residents of our city. Recipient agencies will be able to use these funds to improve their current programs and start new health services for the city's Latino community.

The recipient agencies and amounts are: Neighbors' Consejo (\$350,000), Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Care (\$50,000) and EOFULA (\$25,000). Congratulations to the recipients, and I look forward to learning about our progress over the next year with the program.



## Anniversary of Washington Convention Center

It's amazing how quickly a year goes by. On March 30, I helped celebrate the first anniversary of the Washington Convention Center. The new center has become a symbol for what the District of Columbia can accomplish. I joined other elected officials and convention center leadership in acknowledging the center's many successes and economic development achievements.

The success of the new Washington Convention Center in its first full year of operation has been phenomenal. It's been attracting new conventions, boosting hotel bookings and increasing delegate spending in the local economy. At the celebration, I thanked the center's staff and service partners for their hard work and sacrifice to get the building up and running in a smooth and professional manner.



One year ago, we stood in the new Convention Center and said that, after a decade of dreaming and construction, the building would affirm our city's status as an international destination, and usher us into a new era of economic development, jobs and revenue for Washington, DC.

To date, the new convention center has hosted nearly 1 million attendees at a total of 209 events. Those 1 million people spent an estimated \$426 million in our city on hotels, restaurants, taxis and shopping in our stores. And in an economy that's sparse on jobs, this building has also generated 225 new jobs at the center—and more than 2,000 new jobs in the hospitality industry around town. Fifty-five percent of employees are District residents and nearly 20 percent are from the Shaw community.

The future is looking bright, with bookings as far out as 2018. And the future is looking equally bright for the center's neighborhood, which will be reborn as a result of the center:

- New jobs are being created
- New stores will open
- New housing and hotels are rising
- A new community improvement district has been formed
- A new action agenda for the Mt. Vernon area has been unveiled

The convention center has changed the face of Washington, DC, and we'll continue to see that change in every corner of the city. So I look forward to another great year at the Washington Convention Center—the future looks bright indeed.

## Mayor's Week in Review

### Mayor Attends DC United Opening Game

On **April 3**, I delivered brief remarks at the DC United soccer team's opening game of the year at RFK Stadium.

### Mayor Incites Pandamania at National Zoo

On **April 6**, I delivered brief remarks at the National Zoo in Northwest to celebrate April as Panda Month here in the District.

### Mayor Attends DC ACT Fundraiser

On **April 7**, I attended a fundraising event for DC Action for Children at the Whole Foods store in Tenleytown in Northwest.

### Mayor Holds Swearing In

On **April 8**, I swore in members of the Convention Center Authority Board of Directors, the Zoning Commission, and the Board of Real Property Assessments and Appeals.

### Leslie Hotaling Says Goodbye

On **April 12**, I attended a goodbye party for Leslie Hotaling, the director of the Department of Public Works.

### Brightwood Elementary School Groundbreaking

On **April 13**, I participated in a groundbreaking for Brightwood Elementary School on Nicholson Street in Northwest.

### 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Senior Fashion Show

On **April 13**, I attended the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Senior Fashion Show at the Omni Shoreham Hotel.





## District Activities



On April 6, Mayor Williams joined US Senators Mike Crapo and James Jeffords at the home of Katherine Funk near Lincoln Park in Southeast to discuss lead in the District's drinking water. A Senate subcommittee held an oversight hearing on the issue on April 7.



On April 13, Mayor Williams, District school officials, and local residents broke ground on a new Brightwood Elementary School in Ward 4. At the completion of three phases of construction, the new school will boast 78,036 square feet, compared to the school's current 42,838 square foot building.



On April 6, Mayor Williams visited the Smithsonian's National Zoo's Panda exhibit where giant pandas Mei Xiang and Tian Tian live. The pandas are at the zoo on a 10-year loan from the China Wildlife Conservation Association. The Mayor declared April Panda Month in the District.

## Community News

- [First Responder Wireless Communication Moves Underground](#)
- [Mayor Williams and Councilmember Schwartz Extend Interagency Task Force on Lead](#)
- [Mayor Williams Announces Expanded Service Organization](#)

[View all News Releases](#)



## Upcoming Events

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|-------------|--|
| <b>4/17</b> | <b>25th Anniversary Celebration and Housing Expo</b><br>10 am – 2 pm<br>815 Florida Avenue, NW<br>For more information, call (202) 777-HOME  |
| <b>5/01</b> | <b>The Cotton Club Revisted</b><br>7:30 pm<br>54601 Connecticut Avenue, NW<br>The Department of Parks and Recreation's performing arts troupe, Voices in Motion, and the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery present this awesome stage performance.<br>For more information, call (202) 282-0721 or (202) 673-6854. |
| <b>5/06</b> | <b>40th Annual Senior Citizens' Day and Health Expo</b><br>11 am – 2 pm<br>DC Armory<br>2001 East Capitol Street, SE<br>District residents 60 years of age and older can call (202) 727-6604 for more information.   |
| <b>5/23</b> | <b>Sheridan Shuffle 3K Fun Run</b><br>11 am<br>4400 36th Street, NW<br>For more information call (202) 362-7900  |

